

Win-Win Negotiation Skills

Negotiation skills are some of the most important competencies one can develop. Negotiation is called into play when the parties in the discussion want different decisions, outcomes, or actions. People may face these discussions with fears of losing advantage, being bullied or failing to get the help or resources needed to accomplish a goal. Worse yet, some individuals may feel that other important outcomes are at stake such as losing approval and support. The definition of a win-win negotiation is that a fair compromise can be reached where both parties feel good about the solution as well as their continuing relationship moving forward. This article outlines some of the considerations when developing one's negotiation competencies.

The heart set and mindset of a win-win style

Fundamentally, reaching a mutually acceptable compromise will have the best chance if both parties feel heard and respected during the negotiation. The heart set and mindset inherently valuable in negotiation is one where there is an atmosphere of mutual trust and positive rapport. Rushing into a negotiation without first establishing a sense of trust and rapport can definitely impact the outcome, so it's important to pay attention to the behaviors that create this positive atmosphere. The heart set and mindset of this style is one of unconditional positive regard, empathy, mindful listening, honesty and confidentiality.¹

Unconditional positive regard means that one's attitude towards another is completely accepting, without reservations and is closely associated with empathy which means to respectfully understanding the other person's feelings, needs, and desires. Connecting with not only what the other person wants, but also the meaning of that need to them is important to uncover, so one can begin to understand those points most important to the other person. Mindful listening means slowing the pace and really listening, with full attention to what the other person is saying. Using reflection and asking follow-on questions helps the other person feel valued and builds a trusting relationship. Behaviors which are not indicative of mindful listening include interrupting the other person, not using reflection techniques, and not assessing both the emotions as well as the facts of the other person's position. It goes without saying that honesty and protecting confidential information are both essential to a good negotiation. Honesty leads to learning and evokes positive feelings and comfort sharing thoughts, feelings, and intuitions, all of which are important to a fair and equitable win-win negotiation.

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Preparing for the discussion

With a sense of trust and rapport established, a good starting place for any negotiation is a careful exploration of each person's position with the goal of finding a compromise that preserves as much of what each party wants as possible. People may initially appear opposed, but after a careful discussion, may find themselves building mutually agreeable ways of compromising on their initial positions.

Prior to the discussion and depending on the scale of the negotiation, it may be helpful to prepare one's thoughts.

Hallett (2013) lists some areas to consider:

- **“Goals:** what do you want to get out of the negotiation? What do you think the other person wants?
- **Trades:** What do you and the other person have that you can trade? What do you each have that the other wants? What are you each comfortable giving away?
- **Alternatives:** if you don't reach agreement with the other person, what alternatives do you have? Are these good or bad? How much does it matter if you do not reach agreement? Does failure to reach an agreement cut you out of future opportunities? And what alternatives might the other person have?
- **Relationships:** what is the history of the relationship? Could or should this history impact the negotiation? Will there be any hidden issues that may influence the negotiation? How will you handle these?
- **Expected outcomes:** what outcome will people be expecting from this negotiation? What has the outcome been in the past, and what precedents have been set?
- **The consequences:** what are the consequences for you of winning or losing this negotiation? What are the consequences for the other person?
- **Power:** who has what power in the relationship? Who controls resources? Who stands to lose the most if agreement isn't reached? What power does the other person have to deliver what you hope for?
- **Possible solutions:** based on all of the considerations, what possible compromises might there be?”^{2, p 1}

Crafting a win-win approach

In addition to using the skills to establish trust and rapport and preparing for the negotiation, it is important to consider which approach best fits one's personal style. Andrea Reynolds developed a Persuasion Tools Model ³

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that describes the best negotiation approach to use given one's own levels of intuition and persuasion capabilities.

The approaches to negotiation described by Reynolds are emotion, logic, bargaining and compromise.

Emotion

If one has good levels of emotional intelligence and intuition, using emotion effectively can often be used to influence the decisional outcomes. For example, if negotiating with an organization places a high value on working with vendors who are women and/or minority-owned or who invest part of their profits in charitable organizations, then that feature of the selling organization may be highlighted as a differentiating benefit.

Logic

In situations where facts and data are important considerations, one may choose to use a logical approach. One would make the case using an effective presentation of the information best highlighting why a certain decision is the best choice. Benefits of providing a product or service that is faster, cheaper, more convenient or provides a differential return on investment may be considered for inclusion in this type of approach.

Bargaining

Bargaining is another approach used in negotiation. Each party suggests alternatives until both are satisfied that the value each receives is worth what each is giving up to reach a compromise. Effective bargaining requires a high level of emotional intelligence and intuition to not only decide what elements of the decision can be bargained but also when and how hard to bargain in order to reach an agreement. If one bargains too soon, the result may be a compromise on an element of the negotiation that may have been retained if one had waited. Alternatively, if one "holds out" and isn't willing to compromise, the other party may leave the negotiation entirely or feel that the result was a win-lose agreement which could negatively impact the relationship long term.

Compromise

Finally, both parties can employ compromise as a beneficial approach to negotiations. By definition, compromising means each party is willing to bend or adjust certain aspects of their position in order to reach a satisfactory agreement. For example, timing may be of the essence, so in return, the buyer may be willing to give the vendor a

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10% bonus if the product or service can be implemented or installed by a certain date. Perhaps the buyer isn't quite sure that the vendor will achieve all of the outcomes claimed in the sales pitch, so the vendor may defer payment and instead may be willing to be paid bonuses when certain outcomes are met.

Conclusion

Negotiation skills are important competencies to develop in nearly every walk of life, both professionally and personally. The key competencies of establishing trust and rapport, preparing for the negotiation and using the approach that best fits the situation and one's own strengths are all important to the achievement of successful negotiation outcomes.

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